

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1432

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMCONSUL OPORTO

COMUSFORAZ

CINCEUR

CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L PONTA DELGADA 151

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: AZOREAN DEVELOPMENTS: FIRST WEEK OF ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

1. FIRST WEEK OF ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN IN THE AZORES WAS MARKED BY THE VISITS OF PPD LEADER SA CARNEIRO, CDS LEADER FREITAS DO AMARAL AND MRPP LEADER ARNALDO MATOS. ALL THREE PARTY LEADERS HELD MEETINGS IN THE THREE DISTRICTS OF THE AZORES. THE ONLY INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN PONTA DELGADA, A WEAK MOLOTOV COCKTAIL WITH THE FUSE BURNING WAS DISCOVERED AT SA CARNEIRO'S RALLY IN PONTA DELGADA, BUT IT DID NOT DISRUPT THE MEETING. A CROWD PREVENTED THE MRPP MEETING FROM TAKING PLACE, BURNING PARTY FLAGS AND DAMAGING SOUND EQUIPMENT. POLICE AND SOLDIERS FINALLY RESCUED THE MRPP MILITANTS FROM THE CROWD.

2. THE PPD AND CDS RALLIES IN PONTA DELGADA DID NOT DRAW LARGE CROWDS, PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF A FEAR OF AN INCIDENT. THE PPD RALLY WAS BETTER ATTENDED AND BETTER ORGANIZED THAN THE CDS ONE. BOTH SA CARNEIRO AND FREITAS DO AMARAL STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE LOCAL PARTIES' STAND ON

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AZOREAN QUESTIONS. BOTH LEADERS ATTRIBUTED SEPARATISM TO

LISBON'S HISTORY OF NEGLECT OF THE ISLANDS AND BOTH EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CONSTITUTION'S PROVISION ON AUTONOMY. FACTOR WHICH MIGHT HANDICAP THE CDS WAS THAT FREITAS DO AMARAL IN HIS SPEECH SUPPORTED A REFERENDUM FOR THE AZORES BUT THEN IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION EXPLAINED THAT UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION A REFERENDUM, USUALLY DEFINED, CANNOT BE HELD.

3. VISITS TO VILLAGES ON SAO MIGUEL INDICATE SEVERAL TRENDS: 1) THERE IS A GENERAL SHIFT TO THE RIGHT, THE PS HAS LOST VOTES IN FORMER STRONGHOLDS AND THE CDS HAS GAINED MANY; 2) THE CDS IS STRONGER IN THE RURAL AREAS; 3) SEPARATISM IS VERY STRONG IN THE RURAL AREAS; AND 4) THERE IS A MARKED APATHY TOWARD THE ELECTIONS IN SPITE OF EFFORTS OF LOCAL LEADERS (PRIESTS AND VILLAGE MAYORS) TO ENCOURAGE VOTING. THE APATHY IS GREATEST IN THE RURAL AREAS AND AMONG THE MORE CONSERVATIVE VOTERS.

4. OUT OF THE SIX SEATS IN THE AZORES, 3 IN PONTA DELGADA, 2 IN ANGRA AND ONE IN HORTA, AT THIS POINT IT LOOKS AS IF THE PPD CAN COUNT ON THREE SURE SEATS, ONE IN EACH DISTRICT. THE CDS WILL GET ONE IN PONTA DELGADA. IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHO WILL CAPTURE THE THIRD SEAT IN PONTA DELGADA AND THE SECOND IN ANGRA. PPD LEADERS ARE BECOMING MORE CONFIDENT THEY WILL RETAIN THE SECOND SEAT IN ANGRA AND HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF A STRONG CANDIDATE IN NUMBER TWO POSITION ON THEIR SLATE, DR. MELO ALVES THE POPULAR ACTING GOVERNOR, BUT THE CDS MAY SURPRISE THEM. IN PONTA DELGADA, THE PS MAY HAVE LOST TOO MANY VOTES TO ELECT JAIME GAMA. IF SO THE ODDS FAVOR THE PPD GAINING THE SEAT.
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